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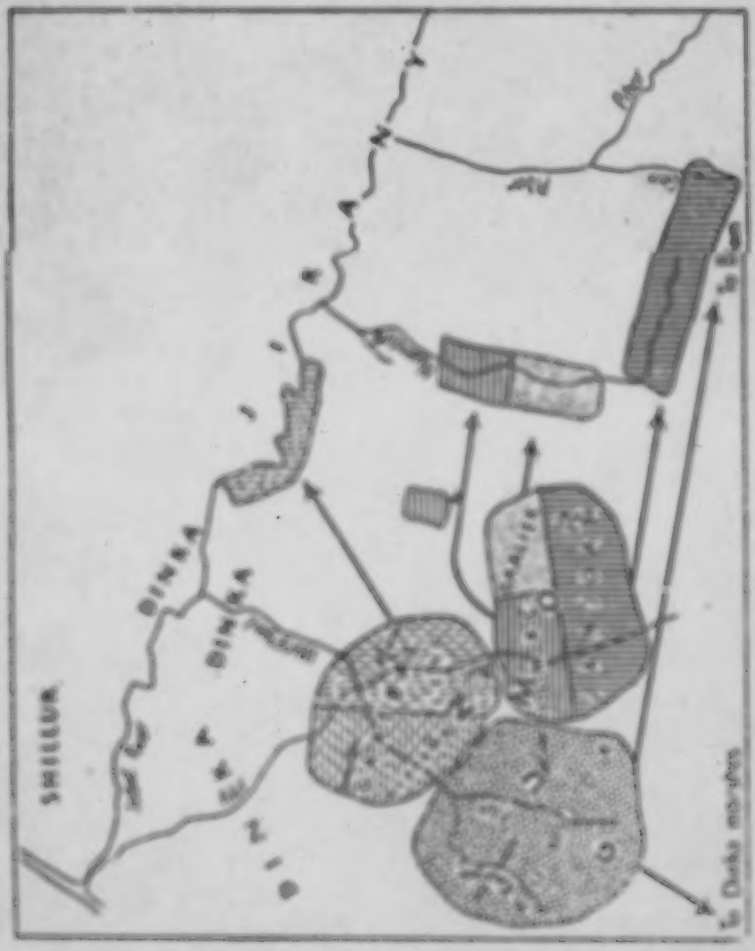

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Here we make only two observations of a more general order. (1) Although the Nuer have a mixed pastoral-horticultural economy their country is more suitable for cattle husbandry than for horticulture, so that the environmental bias coincides with the bias of their interest and does not encourage a change in the balance in favour of horticulture. If it were not for rinderpest—a recent introduction—it might be possible to live a purely pastoral life, but, as we shall see later, a purely horticultural life would be precarious. (2) Nuer cannot, except in a few favoured spots, live in one place throughout the year. The floods drive them and their herds to seek the protection of higher ground. Absence of water and pasture on this higher ground compels them to move during the drought. Hence their life is of necessity migratory, or, more strictly, transhumant. A further reason that urges them to change their abode according to the seasons is their inability at the present time to subsist solely on the products of their cattle. A milk and meat diet has to be supplemented by grain and fish; and whereas the most suitable place for cultivation of millet is inland, on the edge of slightly elevated ground, fish are found in rivers which are generally distant from these elevated stretches.

II

Excess or insufficiency of water is the first problem that faces Nuer. It is essential that cattle should be protected from the water that covers the country in the rains, for they quickly get diseases of the hoof if they have to stand in water for long periods. Village sites are selected on the only spots affording such protection to man and beast: patches of slightly higher ground. When the rains have ceased water supplies near villages are soon exhausted, because, naturally, the highest and driest sites have been selected for building, and it becomes necessary to move to pools, lakes, lagoons, marshes, and rivers. Owing to the vast rivers that traverse Nuerland and the thorough irrigation they give to the country through a network of channels there is seldom difficulty about finding surface water, though people may have to go far to obtain it. Only in parts of Lou, Gaawar, and Eastern Jikany, as far as is known, are they regularly forced to dig wells in the beds of streams at the height of the

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Sketch-map to show distribution of the Eastern Jikany tribal sections (arrows point from area of villages to dry season camps) (after Mr. C. L. Armstrong).

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drought. Twenty years ago this was probably more customary among the Lou than to-day, for they had not then the undisputed access to open water that most sections now enjoy. The wells, which have to be redug each year, are two to three feet in diameter and twenty to thirty feet in depth, and their excavation takes two or three days of hard labour. The water, about a foot deep, is clean and fresh and the wells are frequently cleaned out, steps being cut in the walls for this purpose (Plate XV (b)). Each household has its own well which is surrounded by shallow mud troughs where the cattle are watered three times daily. Considerable labour is required to draw water for them and much attention is devoted to prevent it from being fouled by sheep and goats, which have their special troughs. Fights sometimes break out over these troughs.

The problem of water is closely related to that of vegetation. In their seasonal movements Nuer seek pasturage as well as drinking-water and they take the cattle to where they know that both can be obtained. When herdsmen drive the cattle from camp to grazing grounds they do not guide them haphazardly across the plain, but with purpose towards stretches of succulent grasses. It is probable, too, that not only are daily and seasonal movements influenced by distribution of grasses, but also that the direction of Nuer expansion has been controlled by their habitat. Nuer claim that they have not overrun the country of the Ngok Dinka because it is poor pasture land and that they are little interested in the Shilluk kingdom for the same reason.

The early rains are the season of fatness, for then the grasses germinate, or renew their growth after the long drought, and the cattle can graze on the young shoots to their content. As the rains advance, grazing becomes more difficult, the ground being flooded and the vegetation rank, and in years of high water may be a serious problem. The cattle have to rely on the short grasses that prevail on village ridges: a further reason that compels Nuer to occupy these sites in the rains. When rain ceases, the overcropped grasses on these ridges soon wither, while the rank grasses of the plains impede the movements of the herds and no longer provide good grazing. Therefore Nuer hasten to burn them as soon as they are dry, since some species

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send up new shoots a few days after being fired—probably those that have rootslong enough to tap water held up in the clay beds and a clump formation that protects the core of the plants from the flames. If it were not for this habit cattle could not survive, at any rate inland, during a dry year. When the grasses have been fired cattle can wander as they please, being no longer frustated by surface water and rank growth, and satisfy their apetites on the new shoots. As water becomes scarcer and grazing poorer Nuer fall back on permanent water where they make large camps and the cattle can graze on marsh plants that abound in numberless depressions and make good milk. In May, when the new rains set in, they are able to return to their villages. The few cattle Nuer possess, the vast spaces they can exploit, and their nomadic existence ensure that there is nowhere serious overgrazing.

Variation of water-supplies and vegetation thus forces Nuer to move and determines the direction of their movements. In a later section we shall see that fishing is another important consideration in these movements. In late November or early December the youths and some of the girls take the cattle from the villages to camps, generally some miles away, leaving the older people toharvest the second millet crop and repair huts and byres. Usually a few lactating cows are left behind to provide milk for the small children. These early camps (*wec jiom*) are made near pools in a place where the grasses have previously been fired. In Lou country they are often made in thornwood forest, where *Balanites aegyptiaca* is abundant, but in many parts of Nuerland, especially to the west of the Nile, they are formed on stream banks for fishing. When the second harvest has been reaped the cattle are brought back to the villages to eat the millet stalks, if they are near enough. As pools dry up, pasturage is exhausted, or fishing becomes poor, the youths make new camps, where they are joined by the married people, and they may move camp several times before settling in their final camping grounds (*wec mai*) at the side of lakes or rivers in January and February. The early camps are small, being manned by a few kinsmen, but they tend to get larger as the season advances and water becomes scarcer, and the final camps may contain several hundred persons.

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The dry season movements of the Lou, the Eastern Jikany, and the Zeraf River tribes are shown on the sketch-maps accompanying this section. Of the Sobat tribes, the Lou stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season, falling back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, e.g. Muot tot, Muot dit, Fading, Fadol, Gwong-gwong, Yollei, Tepjor, and Nyerol. If forced to leave them the Gun primary section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plains of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka, and the Mor primary section moves north-east to the Nyanding river and east to the Geni and Pibor. In the old days [121] fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping sites, because the banks of the Sobat were in the hands of the Balak Dinka while their occupation of the Geni and Pibor was disputed by the Anuak and Beir and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding do not belong to the Lou, but to the Gaajok. Therefore they probably only moved to these sites when absolutely necessary.

The Eastern Jikany have not so much need to move as have the Lou. Nevertheless they all fall back on rivers or marshes before the drought is far advanced. The three primary sections of the Gaajok move as follows: the Laang concentrate on the Sobat, the Wangkac move south-east to the banks of the Pibor and Gila, and the Yol either camp near the junction of the Wokau and Sobat or northwards along the edges of the Machar swamp. The Gaagwang move to the western end of Khor Makwai. The Gaajak primary sections move as follows: the northern Thiang sections (Kang and Lony) go to the Daga river while the southern Thiang section (Tar) and the Reng, Nyayaa, Wau, and Cany sections camp on the banks of the Baro, Jokau, Adura, and Makwei, mainly in Ethiopia.

The three Zeraf river tribes fall back on the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Zeraf and streams flowing into these two rivers, as shown in Mr. Lewis's sketch. The Gaawar who live on the left bank of the Zeraf can build their villages on high ground near that river and do not have to move far in the drought.

The Western Nuer mainly camp on inland streams which are no great distance from their villages. The Karlual primary section of the Leek tribe mostly concentrate first on the Loogh stream and afterwards on the Cal and Wangtac, all of which link up with the Bahr el Ghazal. The Dok camp near pools in the beds of inland streams. The Western Jikany move to the Jikany marshes at the edge of the Bahr el Ghazal. Without giving

[See pp 50, 58, 60 — analyst]

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further details, which, indeed, I could not furnish, about the disposition of the Western Nuer in the dry season, it may be said that they travel very much less than most of the Eastern Nuer tribes, especially the Lou.

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Different villages and sections tend to move about the same time and to visit the same pools each year, though time and place and, to some extent, degree of concentration vary according to climatic conditions. Usually, however, the main dry season camps are formed yearly at the same spots. When the rains commence in May the older people return to the villages to prepare the ground for sowing and they are joined there in June by the youths and girls, who bring the cattle with them. When the younger people return the whole camp is broken up on the same day, and the cattle are driven to their village with as few halts as possible. The move from villages to camps, on the contrary, is less concerted and abrupt. The younger members of two or three families form a small camp, after the firing of the grasses in November, when and where they please. Several days later they may be joined by other people from the same village, or these may form a separate camp. There is still water and some grazing on the village sites and there is still work to be accomplished in gardens and homesteads. Thus, while camps change into villages overnight, villages change into camps more slowly. By the height of the drought every one is in camp and the villages are silent and deserted.

The year thus consists of a period in villages and a period in camps, and the camp period is divided into the early part of the dry season when the younger people move from small camp to small camp and the latter part of the dry season when every one is concentrated in large camps round permanent water which they do not leave till they return to their villages.

III

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Nuer are forced into villages for protection against floods and mosquitoes and to engage in horticulture, and are forced out of villages into camps by drought and barrenness of vegetation and to engage in fishing. I describe these villages and camps very shortly.

Some tribes are better off for sites than others. The Lou

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342 573 are simply constructed, the roots of grasses, or occasionally stems of millet, being tightly packed in a narrow trench to make windscreens, and the tops of the grasses being bound together and plastered with dung on the outside to make huts (Plates XV (*a*), XIX (*a*), and XXI (*b*)). The whole space within a windscreen is occupied by a hearth of ashes on which the men sleep around a fire, and the openings face the kraal. If people do not intend to spend more than a few days at a site they often sleep in the open and do not trouble to erect windscreens and huts. These light dwellings can be erected in a few hours.

IV

221 136 231 Another circumstance that determines Nuer movements is the abundance of insect life, which is an ever-present menace, for the cattle get little rest from stinging flies and ticks from morn till nightfall and would be worried to death if their masters did not give them some protection.

136 231 372 Mosquitoes swarm in the rains, their ravages being terrible from July to September, when, as soon as the sun sets, men and beasts have to take refuge in huts and byres. The doors of the huts are tightly closed, the air-holes blocked, and fires lit. In the centre of the byres, which house the cattle, burn large dung fires which fill them with smoke so dense that one cannot even see the cattle. Young men sleep on platforms above the fires, and if the smoke clears—the doors are shut, but it escapes through the thatched roof—they descend to pile on more fuel. By this means the beasts are enabled to obtain some rest at night. At the end of the rains while the cattle are still in the villages they are left in the kraals till their masters go to bed, when they are shut in the byres to protect them from lions. Fires are not made up so high at this season, for mosquitoes are less troublesome, since there is no surface water, the millet has been cut, and the grasses are close-cropped. Later those men who remain in the villages, while the others go into camps, often erect windscreens in the kraals and spend the night outside with any cows which have been left behind. In the dry season mosquitoes are absent except near pools and marshes, and even in the vicinity of water they are not troublesome from January to May, so that the herds can sleep in the open. Nevertheless,

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226 therefore, are an indispensable article of food, and the pursuit of them influences seasonal movements.

226 262 The rivers teem with fish of many edible species which greatly supplement the diet of the Nuer in the dry season and enable them to survive years in which the crops fail or there are epidemics among the herds. In choosing camp sites opportunities for fishing are considered no less than water and pasturage. Nevertheless, Nuer do not regard themselves as a water-people, and despise people like the Shilluk who, they say, live mainly by fishing and hunting hippopotami. In spite of this suggestion of superiority Nuer enjoy fishing and the feeling of well-being a full fish diet gives them. One may judge how great their catch must be at the height of the dry season from the fact that one can see along the Baro and Sobat cattleless fishing camps (*kul*) in which, except for a little grain, goat's milk, and an occasional wild beast, people live on fish alone for several weeks. These are poor people who either have no cattle or have one or two cows which they have placed in the care of richer relatives, for no Nuer would live without his cattle if he could help it, and they are despised as persons of Anuak or Balak Dinka descent. Some Nuer tribes fish more than others, according to their opportunities. Thus Lou country has poor fishing compared with Eastern Jikany which has a network of waterways. Tribes and tribal sections jealously guard their fishing rights, and people who want to fish extensively in a pool must first obtain permission from its owners if they do not want to provoke fighting.

226 221 It is the seasonal flooding, due to the rise and fall of the rivers and the flatness of the country, that allows Nuer to kill fish in such large numbers, for they are carried out of the rivers, where they are little accessible to the simple methods of Nuer fishing, into streams and lagoons where they are more vulnerable. The best months are November and December, when the rivers begin to fall and to drain streams and lagoons, which can be dammed at suitable points and the fish speared in their efforts to break downstream. Fishing from dams is conducted mainly at night, fires being lighted behind the fishers, who fix their attention on a line of withies placed upstream from the dam and hurl their spears at whatever point of the line fish reveal

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their presence by striking the withies. My friend the late Mr. L. F. Hamer, who took the photograph reproduced in Plate XXII(*a*), about sunrise, reckoned that quite a hundred fish are caught from a dam in a single night. The dams are lowered as the water falls.

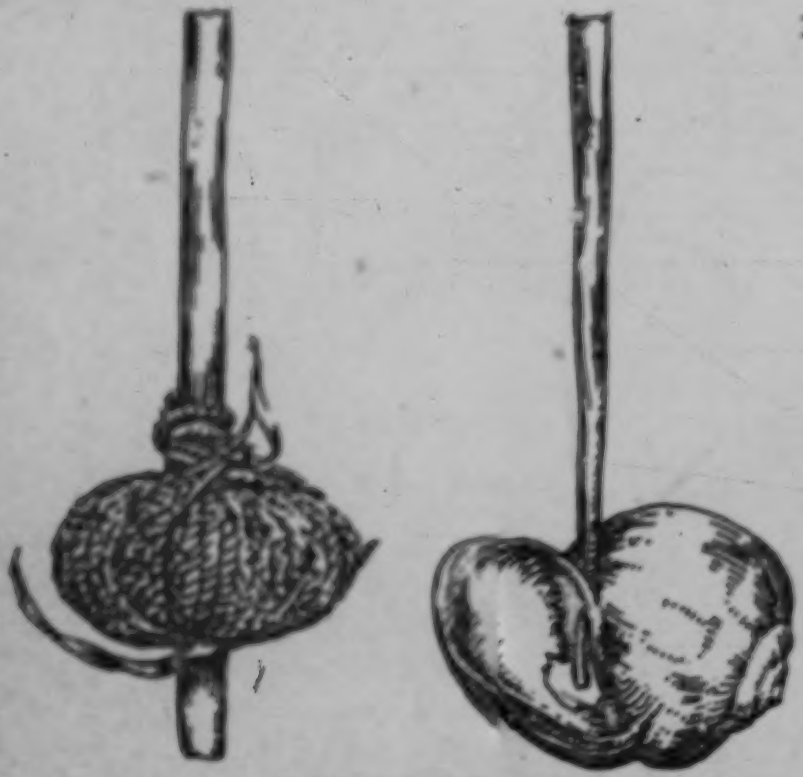

FIG. 10. Instruments for attracting fish.

As the dry season advances a great number of fish are imprisoned in lakes and lagoons from which there is no outlet, and as these dry up they are confined to a smaller and smaller expanse of water and are killed by individual fishers using barbed spears and long harpoons (Plates X and XXII (*b*)), and, at the end of the season, by battues in which gaffs and basket traps may also be employed. Fishing is fairly consistently productive throughout the drought, its yield increasing somewhat in the battue period and rising to a second peak at the

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commencement of the rains, in April and May, when the rivers begin to rise again and bring the fish into the shallows where they are easily speared among the reeds and weeds. There is very little fishing—by spear in occasional lagoons—after the Nuer have returned to their villages, for these are mainly inland, away from open water, and the streams are too deep and too infested with crocodiles to encourage fishing. Also, the fish are widely distributed by flood water and protected by rank marsh vegetation. Those Nuer whose villages are on the banks of large rivers sometimes fish from dug-out canoes (Plate IX) with long harpoons, but the Nuer possess very few good canoes —and these they have exchanged or stolen from the Anuak—for they have neither the wood nor the skill to make more than crudely burnt-out vessels of palm and sycamore.

Nuer are fine spearmen but, otherwise, not very ingenious fishermen. Except for occasional fish spitted with amazing rapidity from the bows of canoes by harpoons and spears as they jump or rise to the surface, Nuer never see their prey, but either hurl their spears at random into likely spots amid weeds and reeds or set up grasses and withies to indicate the presence of fish. A myth recounts that once upon a time all fish were visible to the human eye but that God later made them invisible in the water. The chief Nuer weapon is the barbed spear, though the harpoon is considerably used. When fishing in shallows with spears they sometimes strike the water with a ball of twine or the shell of a giant snail attached to a stick (Fig. 10) to attract the fish. Fish are eaten roasted or boiled.

VI

Nuerland is also very rich in game, though Nuer do not exploit this source of food extensively. There are vast herds of tiang and cob; other antelopes are plentiful; and buffalo, elephant, and hippopotami abound. Nuer eat all animals except carnivora, monkeys, some of the smaller rodents, and zebra, and they kill the last for its skin and tail in the south of Lou country, where it roams in the dry season. Lions abound, especially to the west of the Nile, and are a serious menace to the herds, but Nuer only kill them and leopards, the skins of which are worn by chiefs, if they attack cattle in kraals or grazing grounds, as

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VII

In most years wild fruits, seeds, and roots are not an important item in Nuer diet. Their country is mainly treeless and fruits therefore few; only 'wild dates' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), found in occasional patches to the west of the Nile and in more extensive stretches to the east, provide much sustenance. The fruits ripen from about January to March and both the kernels and their sweet fleshy covering are eaten. A number of other fruits are eaten, mainly by children. Initiated youths refuse most of them. The seeds and roots of water-lilies (*Nymphaea lotus*), which are found in pools and lagoons in the early dry season are much relished. The seeds of 'wild rice' (*Oryza Barthii*) are collected and a number of wild plants that grow on village sites are used as seasoning for porridge. In famine years much greater attention is paid to the wild harvest. 'Wild dates' are then a great stand-by and people eat a wide range of fruits, ripening mainly in the early part of the drought, which they neglect when hunger is not severe, and make use of bush-yams and the seeds of wild sorghum and other grasses.

VIII

It will have been noted that fishing, hunting, and collecting are dry-season occupations and produce during that season the necessary supplement to an insufficient milk diet. In the wet season, when these activities are no longer profitable and the milk yield tends to fall off, the heavy rains, which cause the changes responsible for these losses in supply, produce conditions suitable for horticulture, impossible in the drought, that will replace them. The variation in food-supply throughout the year and its sufficiency for life at all seasons is thus determined by the annual cycle of oecological changes. Without grain in the wet season Nuer would be in a parlous state; and since it can be stored they can, also, to a small extent, make provision against famine in the drought.

Climatic conditions together with flooding and the flatness of the country make it impossible to cultivate most Central African food plants in Nuerland, and the Nuer are especially unfortunate in having no root crop as a reserve in famine years.

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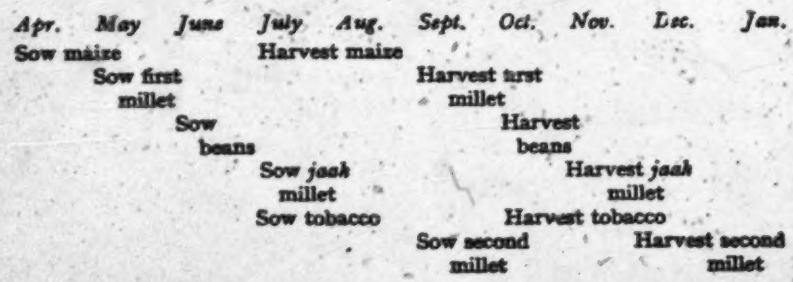
seedlings by beating them into the sticky clay or by washing the soil from their roots. I have not known a season in Nuerland in which drought or excessive rain did not in some measure destroy the crops after sowing. Elephants do much damage when the millet has passed the vulnerable seedling period and I have known the gardens of a village to be partially destroyed three years in succession by these beasts. Weaver-birds take an annual toll when the millet is ripening, but Nuer do nothing to scare them unless they are in such numbers that they threaten to consume the whole harvest, when they erect bird-watching platforms in the gardens. In some years—I do not know how often—the country is visited by locusts which cause immediate and wholesale destruction. At various stages of growth guinea-fowl, crows, ostriches, and some of the smaller antelopes do much damage, and waterbuck show a great liking for the second crop. Sometimes, though I think rarely, Nuer build huts in their gardens, if they are some way from the village, to guard the millet from these depredations, but generally they show little concern, hoping that the proximity of dwellings will keep animals away and, if it does not, accepting the consequences with a detachment that appears sometimes to be almost indifference.

HORTICULTURAL CALENDAR



The calendar shown above is an approximation, since the time of sowing and harvesting depends on the commencement of the first heavy rains, which is subject to annual variations. The horticultural season generally begins at the end of March for those who are able to spend the drought in or near their homes on river banks, but most people have to wait till they can return to their villages in April or May before they can start clearing their gardens. Married people usually return to their villages in the first half of

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241 May and start to prepare the ground around their homesteads for
221 maize. At the end of the month, or in June, the younger people return with the cattle and assist in clearing last year's millet gardens and in the hard work of hoeing new ground. Prolific grasses spring up with the millet which has to be weeded at least three, and maybe four or five, times. The more weeding done for the first crop the less is needed for the second crop.

While the first crop is ripening adjacent strips are cleared for the second crop (Plate XI (*b*)), which is sown shortly before the first is harvested, at the end of August or in September, and it grows together with the new shoots that spring from the roots of the first crop after its stems have been chopped down. In Eastern Nuerland the second sowing is made among the standing crop or on an extension of the garden, but in Western Nuerland and in parts of the Zeraf Island the ground is so flooded that it is made on prepared mounds of earth. I would again draw attention to Plate XII, where these mounds are illustrated, for it admirably shows what Nuerland is like in the rains and conveys a clear impression of the obstacles confronting Nuer horticulture. The second crop has also to be weeded several times and, as the same garden will be used for the first sowing in the following rains, the more thoroughly it is weeded now the less work there will be to do then. In many parts of Nuerland the second harvest may be almost as big as the first, and it is probable that where local conditions are adverse to one crop they favour the other. It appears that while the sown millet of the second crop requires much moisture and will not flourish if the rains fall off early the millet which sprouts from the old stems does best in drier conditions and may be spoilt by late heavy showers, so that one or the other is likely to ripen, and in moderate conditions both may thrive.

[177] In some districts of the Lou and Eastern Jikany tribes the culture of a slow-maturing millet called *jaak* (*Sorghum durra*) has been copied from the Dinka. The spot chosen for cultivation is not burnt at the annual firing of the bush, but early in the following rains when the new grasses have sprung up among the old. Although this kind of millet has certain disadvantages it has caught on in a few places because it requires less clearing and weeding and is very hardy.

241 Nuer know nothing of crop rotation, having indeed no crops to rotate, nor of manures, though the droppings of cattle and the ashes of burnt weeds and brushwood no doubt act as fertilizers. They never allow their homestead gardens to lie fallow for a year to enable the soil to recuperate, but plant year

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often received some such reply as: 'Oh well, such is our custom. We have cattle.'

I wish to emphasize, in conclusion, the following points: (1) that Nuer cultivate only enough grain for it to be one element in their food-supply and not enough to live on it alone; (2) that with their present climate and technology considerable increase in horticulture would be unprofitable; and (3) that the dominance of the pastoral value over horticultural interests is in accord with oecological relations which favour cattle husbandry at the expense of horticulture. Nuer values and oecological relations, therefore, combine to maintain the bias towards cattle husbandry, in spite of rinderpest having rendered it a more precarious occupation than hitherto.

IX

It has been mentioned that Nuer must have a mixed economy in the given oecological relations because no one source of food is sufficient to keep them alive, and that the dominant food-producing activity at each season is determined by the oecological cycle. The different elements of diet, therefore, have an oecologically determined relation to one another and these relations can be roughly plotted.

Milk foods, millet in the form of porridge and beer, a little maize, fish, and meat, are the main items of Nuer diet. Milk is a staple food all the year round, though cows probably tend to give a smaller yield towards the end of the rains owing to insufficiency of pasturage, and it is said that there is a tendency for them to calve in numbers after the first harvest and therefore to cease lactating a few weeks earlier—if this is correct it is possibly due to the hot weather in February and March bringing the cows on heat. This seasonal tendency and the respective contributions of cattle and millet to Nuer food-supply are brought out in a story in which Cow and Millet have a dispute. Cow says that Millet is a person of no importance and that it is her milk that keeps people alive throughout the year, while in time of famine they can eat her flesh and live. Millet replies that Cow's claims are doubtless just, but that when she is ripe the children are glad, for they chew the sweet stems and rub out the grain between their hands and eat it,

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and there is plenty of porridge and beer. Cow argues that anyhow porridge without milk is unpalatable and that her milk will be finished by the time Millet is ripe. It is difficult to confirm these variations in the yield of milk or to estimate their importance, but the tendency for it to rise slightly in the dry season is indicated in the chart opposite.

Millet is consumed as porridge and beer in large quantities in the months between the first harvest and departure for dry-season camps. If the harvest has been good people like to eat their daily porridge in camps, and when the camp grain-supply runs short women journey to the villages to replenish it. When camps break up and people return to their villages millet consumption increases, beer being again brewed, and in a good year there is sufficient to satisfy requirements till the new harvest is ripe. In a normal year Nuer can just tide over these months if they are economical and have been careful not to use much grain in camp. Only in the most favoured parts of the country are they assured of an adequate supply throughout the year. In most parts there is always a very narrow margin between sufficiency and want, and in a bad year starvation is not infrequent. If the crops fail people survive on milk, fish, and wild fruits, and in extremity may kill some of their beasts. Rinderpest is considered a worse calamity. When rinderpest and failure of crops occur in the same year people expect the older age-sets to be wiped out. Much suffering may be caused by excessive drought or flood, which injure both crops and grazing.

There are good and bad fishing years. Generally, over the greater part of the country, consumption of fish is very low, or entirely absent, at the height of the rains. It rises rapidly to a peak at the commencement of the dry weather, and after descending from this point of great abundance remains fairly constant through the drought, rising again in the early rains. Meat of domesticated stock is mainly eaten after harvest when sacrifices and feasts take place. Cattle are seldom slaughtered in the dry season and, in my experience, Nuer do not kill many wild animals, so that consumption of meat is very low at this time of year, though the deficiency is to some extent made up by bleeding the cows and, in rinderpest years, by eating the carcasses of its victims. On the whole the curve of meat con-

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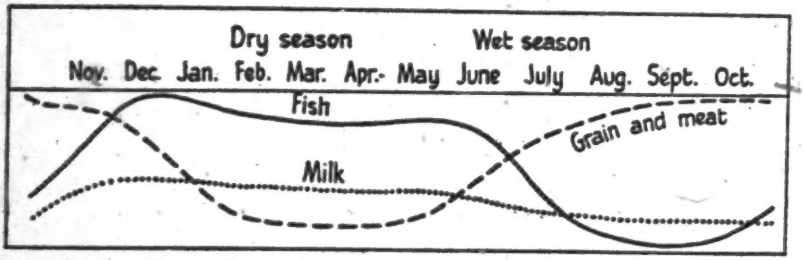
sumption follows that of grain consumption. We need not consider consumption of bush products in a normal year, though it may be kept in mind that they are very useful in famine years, chiefly from January to April.

It will be seen from this chart of relative consumption, which



is only presented as a virtual approximation, that fish largely takes the place of grain and meat as the principal food from January to June and that the time when there is most likely to be a shortage of milk and when few, or no, fish are caught is that when there is plenty of porridge and beer. 'The hungry months', as the Nuer call them, are from May to August when the supply of fish quickly diminishes and maize and millet are still ripening. The months of plenty are from September to the middle of December, when there is abundant millet, and generally much meat, while the end of this period is the best time for fishing. Nuer say that they put on flesh in the rains and lose it in the drought. We may conclude, I think, that even in normal years Nuer do not receive as much nourishment as they require. Their diet is well-balanced, but there is not enough of it at some seasons and there is no surplus to fall back on in the all-too-frequent years of scarcity. Much of Nuer custom and thought is to be attributed to this insufficiency of food. It is wistfully related in one of their stories how once upon a time Man's stomach led an independent life in the bush and lived on small insects roasted by the firing of the grasses, for 'Man was not created with a stomach. It was created apart from him.' One day Man was walking in the bush and came across Stomach there and put it in its present place that it might feed there. Although when it lived by itself it was satisfied with tiny morsels of food, it is now always hungry. No matter how much it eats it is soon craving for more.

1. Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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●221 Seasonal variation in quantity and kind of food is sociologically significant for several reasons, though not all are relevant to the present study. It is, however, important to note that abundance of millet is the main reason for holding ceremonies in the rains, for ritual is seldom complete without porridge and beer and, since it consists of sacrifice, of meat also. Weddings, initiation rites, and religious ceremonies of various kinds take place in the rains and early drought, generally after the first millet harvest. This is also the main season for [721] raiding the Dinka. Nuer say that hunger and war are bad companions and that they are too hungry to fight in the full dry season; and it is evident that they are then not so eager to come to blows over personal and community quarrels as they are in the rainy months, when they are replete with grain and meat and, especially at wedding dances, sometimes slightly intoxi- [F35] cated. Nor do the young men find dancing so attractive in the drought, whereas in the rains they dance as much as possible and think nothing of travelling many miles to attend weddings, at which they dance from eventide till well into the morning. The tempo of village life is different from that of camp life. Owing to flooding at the height of the rains these joint activities take place mainly at the beginning and end—chiefly at the end —of the wet season.

264 574 Scarcity of food at times and the narrow margin that for most of the year divides sufficiency from famine cause a high degree of interdependence among members of the smaller local groups, which may be said to have a common stock of food. Although each household owns its own food, does its own cooking, and provides independently for the needs of its members, men, and much less, women and children, eat in one another's homes to such an extent that, looked at from outside, the whole community is seen to be partaking of a joint supply. Rules of hospitality and conventions about the division of meat and fish lead to a far wider sharing of food than a bare statement of the principles of ownership would suggest. Young men eat at all byres in the vicinity; every household gives beer parties which their neighbours and kinsmen attend; the sar e people are given food and beer at the co-operative work parties that assist in any difficult and laborious task; in camps it is

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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and lunar changes repeat themselves year after year, so that a Nuer standing at any point of time has conceptual knowledge of what lies before him and can predict and organize his life accordingly. A man's structural future is likewise already fixed and ordered into different periods, so that the total changes in status a boy will undergo in his ordained passage through the social system, if he lives long enough, can be foreseen. Structural time appears to an individual passing through the social system to be entirely progressive, but, as we shall see, in a sense this is an illusion. Oecological time appears to be, and is, cyclical.

The oecological cycle is a year. Its distinctive rhythm is the backwards and forwards movement from villages to camps, which is the Nuer's response to the climatic dichotomy of rains and drought. The year (*ruon*) has two main seasons, *tot* and *mai*. *Tot*, from about the middle of March to the middle of September, roughly corresponds to the rise in the curve of rainfall, though it does not cover the whole period of the rains. Rain may fall heavily at the end of September and in early October, and the country is still flooded in these months which belong, nevertheless, to the *mai* half of the year, for it commences at the decline of the rains—not at their cessation—and roughly covers the trough of the curve, from about the middle of September to the middle of March. The two seasons therefore only approximate to our division into rains and drought, and the Nuer classification aptly summarizes their way of looking at the movement of time, the direction of attention in marginal months being as significant as the actual climatic conditions. In the middle of September Nuer turn, as it were, towards the life of fishing and cattle camps and feel that village residence and horticulture lie behind them. They begin to speak of camps as though they were already in being, and long to be on the move. This restlessness is even more marked towards the end of the drought when, noting cloudy skies, people turn towards the life of villages and make preparations for striking camp. Marginal months may therefore be classed as *tot* or *mai*, since they belong to one set of activities but presage the other set, for the concept of seasons is derived from social activities rather than from the climatic changes which determine them, and a year is to Nuer

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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a period of village residence (*cieng*) and a period of camp residence (*wec*).

I have already noted the significant physical changes associated with rains and drought, and some of these have been presented in charts on pp. 52 and 53. I have also described, in the last chapter, the oecological movement that follows these physical changes where it affects human life to any degree. Seasonal variations in social activities, on which Nuer concepts of time are primarily based, have also been indicated and, on the economic side, recorded at some length. The main features of these three planes of rhythm, physical, oecological, and social, are charted on the opposite page.

The movements of the heavenly bodies other than the sun and the moon, the direction and variation of winds, and the migration of some species of birds are observed by the Nuer, but they do not regulate their activities in relation to them nor use them as points of reference in seasonal time-reckoning. The characters by which seasons are most clearly defined are those which control the movements of the people: water, vegetation, movements of fish, &c.; it being the needs of the cattle and variations in food-supply which chiefly translate oecological rhythm into the social rhythm of the year, and the contrast between modes of life at the height of the rains and at the height of the drought which provides the conceptual poles in time-reckoning.

Besides these two main seasons of *tot* and *mai* Nuer recognize two subsidiary seasons included in them, being transitional periods between them. The four seasons are not sharp divisions but overlap. Just as we reckon summer and winter as the halves of our year and speak also of spring and autumn, so Nuer reckon *tot* and *mai* as halves of their year and speak also of the seaons of *rwil* and *jiom*. *Rwil* is the time of moving from camp to village and of clearing and planting, from about the middle of March to the middle of June, before the rains have reached their peak. It counts as part of the *tot* half of the year, though it is contrasted with *tot* proper, the period of full village life and horticulture, from about the middle of June to the middle of September. *Jiom*, meaning 'wind', is the period in which the persistent north wind begins to blow and people harvest, fish

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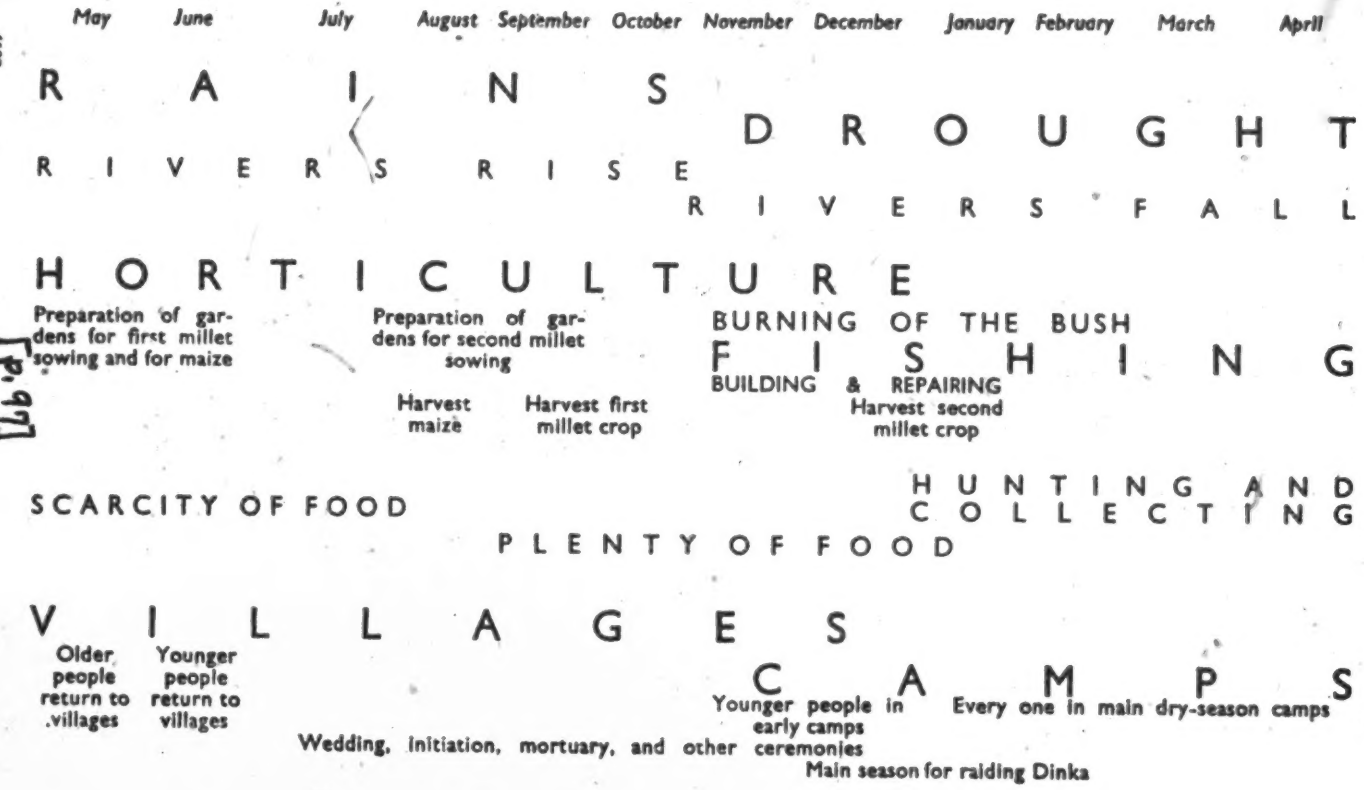

[p. 97]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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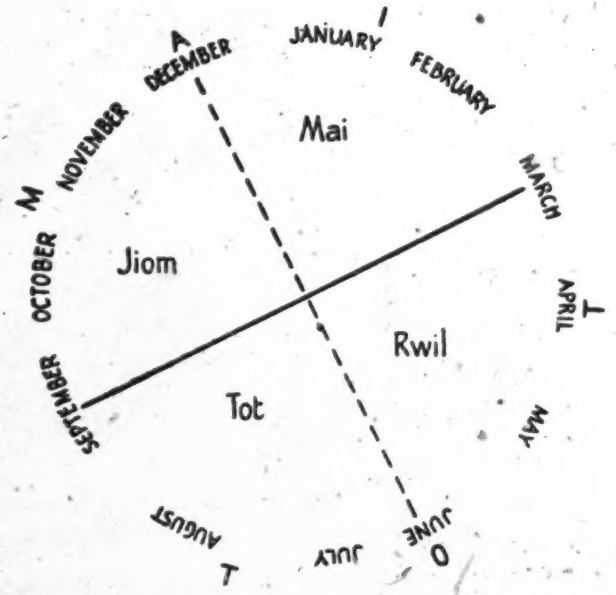
from dams, fire the bush, and form early camps, from about the middle of September to the middle of December. It counts as part of the *mai* half of the year, though it is contrasted with *mai* proper, from about the middle of December to the middle of March, when the main camps are formed. Roughly speaking, therefore, there are two major seasons of six months and four



minor seasons of three months, but these divisions must not be regarded too rigidly since they are not so much exact units of time as rather vague conceptualizations of changes in oecological relations and social activities which pass imperceptibly from one state to another.

In the diagram above a line drawn from mid March to mid September is the axis of the year, being an approximation to a cleavage between two opposed sets of oecological relations and social activities, though not entirely corresponding to it, as may be seen in the diagram below, where village life and camp life are shown in relation to the seasons of which they are the focal points. Nuer, especially the younger people, are still in camp for part of *tot* (the greater part of *rwil*) and are still in villages, especially the older people, for part of *mai* (the greater part of

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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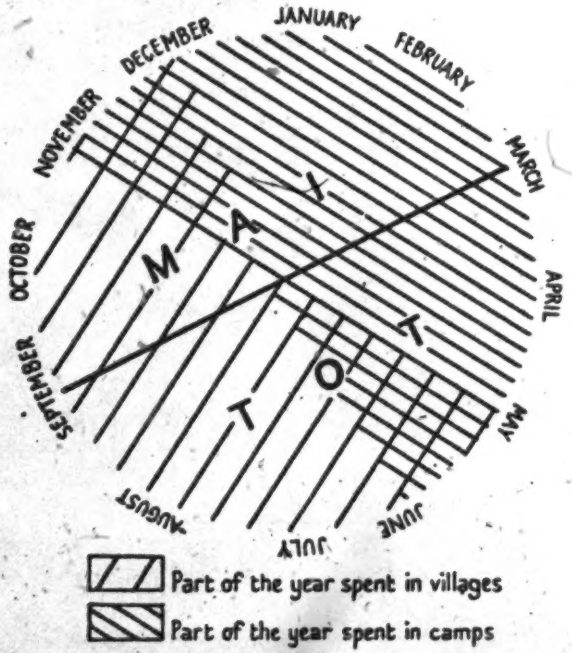
jiom), but every one is in villages during *tot* proper and in camps during *mai* proper. Since the words *tot* and *mai* are not pure units of time-reckoning but stand for the cluster of social activities characteristic of the height of the drought and of the height of the rains, one may hear a Nuer saying that he is going to *'tot'* or *'mai'* in a certain place.



The year has twelve months, six to each of the major seasons, and most adult Nuer can state them in order. In the list of months given below it has not been possible to equate each Nuer name with an English name, because our Roman months have nothing to do with the moon. It will be found, however, that a Nuer month is usually covered by the two English months equated to it in the list and generally tends to coincide with the first rather than the second.

teer	Sept.–Oct.	*duong*	Mar.–Apr.
lath (*boor*)	Oct.–Nov.	*gwaak*	Apr.–May
kur	Nov.–Dec.	*dwat*	May–June
tiop (*in*) *dit*	Dec.–Jan.	*kornyuot*	June–July
tiop (*in*) *tot*	Jan.–Feb.	*paiyatni* (*paiyene*)	July–Aug.
pet	Feb.–Mar.	*thoor*	Aug.–Sept.

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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Nuer would soon be in difficulties over their lunar calendar if they consistently counted the succession of moons,[1] but there are certain activities associated with each month, the association sometimes being indicated by the name of the month. The calendar is a relation between a cycle of activities and a conceptual cycle and the two cannot fall apart, since the conceptual cycle is dependent on the cycle of activities from which it derives its meaning and function. Thus a twelve-month system does not incommode Nuer, for the calendar is anchored to the cycle of oecological changes. In the month of *kur* one makes the first fishing dams and forms the first cattle camps, and since one is doing these things it must be *kur* or thereabouts. Likewise in *dwat* one breaks camp and returns to the villages, and since people are on the move it must be *dwat* or thereabouts. Consequently the calendar remains fairly stable and in any section of Nuerland there is general agreement about the name of the current month.

In my experience Nuer do not to any great extent use the names of the months to indicate the time of an event, but generally refer instead to some outstanding activity in process at the time of its occurrence, e.g. at the time of early camps, at the time of weeding, at the time of harvesting, &c., and it is easily understandable that they do so, since time is to them a relation between activities. During the rains the stages in the growth of millet and the steps taken in its culture are often used as points of reference. Pastoral activities, being largely undifferentiated throughout the months and seasons, do not provide suitable points.

There are no units of time between the month and day and night. People indicate the occurrence of an event more than a day or two ago by reference to some other event which took place at the same time or by counting the number of intervening 'sleeps' or, less commonly, 'suns'. There are terms for to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, &c., but there is no precision about them. When Nuer wish to define the occurrence of an event several days in advance, such as a dance or wedding, they do so by

[1] There is some evidence of an intercalary month among the Eastern Jikany, but I cannot be definite on this point, and I have not heard it mentioned in other parts of Nuerland.

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931,1936) 1951
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KINSHIP AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

361 The Nuer speak of a man's homestead as his *gol*, the primary meaning of which word is the heap of smouldering cattle-dung in the centre of a byre and the hearth around it. In its narrowest social use the word means family, the occupants of the homestead, and it may also therefore have the further sense of household, since there may be other persons living there than members of the owner's family who count nevertheless, as we would say, as members of the family. Frequently the byres and huts of two or three families, the heads of which are commonly brothers or a man and his married sons, are grouped around a common kraal so that we may then speak of a composite homestead; or several homesteads, owned generally by close kin, are adjacent to one another and form distinct clusters which we may call hamlets. Nuer speak of a composite homestead as the *gol* of so-and-so, naming its senior member, although they also refer to each of its component homesteads as the *gol* of its particular owner. They may use the same word to describe what I have called a hamlet, though a cluster of this kind with the land around it is also designated by the word *dhor*, combined with the name either of its senior member, as *dhor* Nyang, the hamlet of Nyang, or of some natural feature, as *dhor ngop*, the hamlet of the wild fig-tree. In its widest connotation *gol* may have the sense of 'lineage', when a lineage is thought of as a residential group. The word *cieng*, which has the general sense of 'home', may be employed to describe a residential group of any size, from single homestead to large tribal division. It is usually coupled with the name of a lineage when it refers to local groups of any size.

When Nuer leave their villages in the dry season they collect, often after temporary dispersal, in large waterside camps. There is then greater solidarity, both spatial and moral, than in the rains. The community of a camp is crowded together in grass windscreens and little grass beehive huts, and the herds which in the rains are tethered in separate kraals are now tethered in the same [233] kraal or in adjacent kraals. In the rains, when water is abundant and pasturage near at hand, the cattle are either not herded at all or each family, or a group of adjacent families, herds its own; but in the dry season, when conditions are different, the cattle of a camp are watered and pastured together and the different families • 221 take it in turn to provide herdsmen. Activities performed of necessity or by preference in parties—hunting, fishing, and collecting—

2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1951
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221 are dry-season activities. Also, milking, cleaning kraals, making up fires, cooking, pounding grain, and other chores which are performed separately and at different times by each household in the villages tend to be performed in unison in the camps. The greater density of the community and the rigours of the season 361 impose a common regimen. Another feature of cattle camps which has some social importance is their composition. Neighbouring village communities which in the rains occupy different sites, often divided by wide swamps, frequently make common camp or they camp so near to each other that there are more intimate relations between their members in the dry season. The radius of effective kinship is greater in the dry season than in the wet.

Although there is this greater cohesion in camps, the families and joint families and larger clusters of kin whose social distinction is evident in the distribution of homesteads in the villages maintain their identity in the distribution of camp windscreens and huts. Each family has its own windscreen, corresponding to its byre in the village, and in the centre of it is the *gol*, its hearth of ashes. Attached to the windscreen are the beehive huts of the womenfolk, just as in the villages their wattle-and-daub huts are attached to the byre. The windscreens of those whose homesteads adjoin in the villages are generally adjacent to, almost touching, one another in the camps and form clearly demarcated rows in the circle of camp dwellings. When a large village is clearly segmented, the separation observable in the distribution of its homesteads can also be noted in the dispersal of smaller camps within the general camping area. These social alinements are most evident in the early part of the dry season, before the large concentrations of the main season have been formed, for then small groups of kin often make independent camps around isolated pools at some, sometimes a considerable, distance from each other.

II

602 All the members of such a village or camp as I have briefly 613 described are kin. Before giving examples in illustration of this 614 statement I must say again what I have already said in *The Nuer* about the difference between lineage relations and kin relations because it is a very important difference. In speaking of lineages I refer to unilateral groups of kin—among the Nuer groups of

[cf. cat. 116, pp. 2 ff -- Analyst]

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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whereas in a similar year Eastern Gaajok country is under water and cattle have to be sent into Lou country while the men fish from trees. Lou are very scornful of Eastern Jikany village sites. I once asked Wicthiel, who now lives at Mancom in Jikany country, whether he could call his present home a *gwaadh wec* (village site) and he replied "Well, it is what the Jikany call a *gwaagh wec*, but it is not what we consider a *gwaadh wec* in our own country (Lou). They just build their villages in the forest anyhow." Huts built on piles, such as one sees in parts of Dinkaland, are unknown in Nuerland.

Water is as scarce in the dry season as it is excessive in the wet season. About the beginning of December, therefore, the young men and some of the girls take most of the cattle to camps some miles from the villages and leave the rest of the women and the married men to harvest the second millet crop and repair huts and byres. A few lactating cows are left in the village to provide milk for the small children. The cattle are taken to camps partly to give them clean water and partly to pasture them. The grasses are burnt and some species spring up again a few days after they are fired. This is a good time for the cattle because they can move freely, the tall grasses which impeded them in the rains having been burnt, and because they can graze to their hearts' content on the tender young shoots.

Local conditions determine the time of leaving the village. In 1936 the first youths to take their cattle into camp from the village of Nyueny moved on November 13th, at the beginning of the Nuer month of *Kur*. This is much earlier than is usual for most villages and was due to lack of clean water at Nyueny and over-grazing of the pastures in the vicinity. The country around the village was all under water in the middle of October but was parched a month later. Most people do not move till the end of the month of *Kur* or the beginning of the month of *Tiop indit* (about the middle of December).

In Lou country the first camps are often made in thornwood forests near deep pools, but in parts of Nuerland, especially in the

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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•221 361 [233] West, they are often made by streams for fishing. When the second harvest is reaped the cattle are brought back to the village to eat the millet stalks, if the camps are near. As pools dry up, or pasturage is exhausted, or the fishing becomes poor, the young men make new camps and several intermediate camps may be made before they move to their large annual camping grounds at the side of lakes or marshes or on river banks. The early camps are often small, being manned by a few kinsmen but tend to get larger as the season continues and water becomes scarcer. The final camps may contain several hundred persons. By the middle of January the villages in the Lou country are deserted but in areas more favoured with water supplies, for example in Lek country, some of the older people may still be in the villages in the middle of February.

The Lou people stay inland as long as they can and in a wet year may remain inland throughout the dry season. They fall back on the deeper pools, some large enough to be called lakes, which hold up the water in a stream or depression, *e.g.*, at Muŏt tŏt, Muot dit, Fading, Fadoi, Gwonggwong, Yollei, Tepjor and Nyerol. These pools supply them with abundant fish. If forced to leave them the Gun major tribal section moves north to the Sobat and south-west to the flooded plain of the Bahr el Zeraf in the country of the Twic Dinka (*toc Twini*) and the Mor major tribal section moves northeast to the Nyanding river or East to the Geni and Pibor rivers.

[721] In the old days fighting frequently occurred if the Lou moved to these camping sites because the banks of the Sobat belonged to the Balak people, while occupation of the Geni and Pibor brought them into contact with the Beir and Anuak peoples, and their move to the south-west was trespass on Dinka grazing grounds. Even the lower reaches of the Nyanding river do not belong to the Lou for the Gaajok have their villages along it and have fishing rights in its pools.

The Madjok villagers with whom I camped for several months at Yakwac in 1931 had moved to Pul Telä for an intermediate camp early in December and had reached Yakwac about the middle of

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January. They remained at Yakwac till the beginning of June when they moved back to their village. As the Nuer put it " They started to move in the month of *Tiop indit* and remained *dar* (in between village and river) in the *muth* (second half) of *Tiop indit*, the whole of the month of *Tiop intot* and the *bor* (first half) of the month of *Pet*. In the first half of *Pet* they arrived at the river and remained there till the first half of the month of *Kornyuot*."

The Eastern Jikany have not the same need to move as have the Lou. Nevertheless, all the Gaajok, Gaajak, and Gaagwang tribal sections fall back on rivers before the dry season is far advanced. The three primary tribal sections of the Gaajok move as follows: The Laang concentrate on the Sobat, the Wangkeac move south-east to the banks of the Pibor and Gila, and the Yol either camp southwards near the junction of the Wokau and the Sobat or northwards along the edges of the Macar swamp. The Gaajak primary tribal sections move as follows: The northern Thiang sections (Kang and Luony) go north to the Daga river, the southern Thiang sections (Tar) and the Reng, Nyayan, Wau, and Cany sections camp on the banks of the Baro, Jokau, Adura, and Makwei rivers. The Gaajak camping grounds are mainly in Abyssinian territory.

I do not know anything of the seasonal movements of the Lak, Gaawăr, and Thiang tribes beyond the fact that they fall back on the Bahr el Jebel and the Bahr el Zeraf and on streams flowing into these two rivers.

The Western Nuer mainly camp on inland streams which are no great distance from their villages. The Karlual people mostly concentrate first on the Loogh stream and afterwards on the Cal and Wangtac streams. All these streams join the Bahr el Ghazal. The Dok camp near pools in the bed of the Waard stream. Without attempting to give full details, which indeed I could not furnish, about other dry season encampments among the Western Nuer it may be said that the people of this part of Nuerland do not travel in the dry season on the same scale as the Eastern Nuer, especially the Lou. Some of their earlier camps are made a few hundred yards from the

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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villages. In 1936 the people of Puic had formed two camps on the Gany stream which could be seen from the village and were so near that the girls came to the camps twice a day from the village to milk the cattle.

The western Jikany move to the Jikany marshes (*toc Jikany*) at the edge of the Bahr el Ghazal. These flood plains of rivers are the most favoured camping sites because, as the swamps slowly dry up, they provide succulent pasturage for the cattle and there is always sufficient water in their deep depressions. In Lou country there are no big stretches of *toc* such as one finds in the flood plains of the Bahr el Ghazal, the Gila River, the Bahr el Zeraf, and in the Macar swamps.

A village tends to move about the same time and to visit the same pastures each year though time and place are determined to some extent by variations of rainfall and river flooding.

The population of camps varies from about 20 to 100 in the smaller intermediate camps, up to several hundred at the larger camps. That is an approximate estimate based on a limited number of bare observations.

Most of the Nuer are in their big dry season camps by February and remain there till May when the married men and women return to the wet season villages to clear the cultivations and to erect fences and to repair huts and byres. If there is then a temporary drought they may return to the camps. The young men and girls follow with the cattle in May or June according as the rains are early or late. The young men encamped at Yakwac in 1930 left early in June for their inland village of Majok. Those encamped at Konye had left for Fadoi shortly before I visited the village on May 15th in 1935. The young men break up camp as soon as their elders who have preceded them to the village send back a messenger to tell them that the rains have fallen heavily in the interior and that sowing has commenced. Instead of the leisurely journey from villages to the big dry season camps, which may take some six weeks, the journey back to the villages in completed as quickly as possible and takes one or two days according to the distance.

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The word *ghuth* is used to describe these movements. It does not denote a mere journey but implies a change of residence and the movement of cattle and household goods. It is used alike of men who drive the cattle from village to camp, from camp to camp, and from camp to village. It is also used of women who move separately, carrying their milk vessels and other possessions in baskets, for "*kwak cereka ghok*" "Household goods are like cattle." Of the movement from villages to camps one says "*Ce nath ghuth wicni*," "the people have moved into camp" and of the movement from camps back to villages one says "*Ce nath ghuth ciang*," "the people have moved to the villages."

The Nuer pastoral year may therefore be divided into two main periods, the six wet season months, from June to December, when the people live in their villages, and the six dry season months, from December to June, when they live in camps. The dry season half of the year may be further divided into the earlier part when people are burning the grasses and living in intermediate small camps for a few weeks, and the latter part when they live for several months in large camps near lakes or wells or on the banks of rivers.

IX.

Inland, especially in Lou country, it is usually necessary to dig wells at the height of the dry season. Twenty years ago this was probably more general than it is today, because, as already explained, the main rivers and marshes lay outside Lou territory. Wells are sometimes dug also in Eastern Jikany country.

As the Sobat falls it drains the streams that intersect Lou country and, before long, their water is reduced to occasional pools where the beds are deepest. In the smaller streams these soon dry up and wells are excavated. Capt. H. H. Wilson first drew attention to these wells at Muöt töt (*Amwot el Sogheir*) in 1902 and wrote of them: "Dug on the sandy banks of the *khor*, their depth varied from 20 to 30 feet, with a diameter of about 2 feet 6 inches. Owing to the solidarity of the ground, the walls of the well stood without much

6: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936)1938
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water or rank vegetation, and as they can graze on the tender shoots. But when the dry season advances pasture becomes scarcer but cattle can graze again over the shoots. Eventually, however, they have to fall back on marsh grasses, especially in a dry year when such grasses of the plains as *dut cieng nath* may fail (it is said *ce tör* or *ce juac tör*). Nuer then make for rivers, swamps, lagoons, and deep marshy depressions where they can always find enough vegetation to keep the cattle alive. The chief marsh grasses are *poon* (*Onyza Barthi A. cheval*), *giëk*, *buogh*, and *kuth yang*. Nuer say that no grasses give more milk than these if the cows can obtain them in abundance.

Cattle also eat a number of plants and these are a useful addition to their diet. A good number of such plants, however, grow in cultivations and are therefore not accessible to the cattle, but some spring up in old garden sites and in the neighbourhood of habitations. Nevertheless cattle are grass grazers and it is mainly sheep and goats which graze on plants, and they eat also the leaves of young trees. Goats will eat almost anything but sheep are daintier feeders and will not touch some of the bitter plants and shrubs that goats devour. The plants eaten by sheep or goats, or by both, generally grow in old cultivations or on old homestead and camp sites. Some of those recorded are *Cak*, 'milk,' so-called because it oozes out a thick white juice when cut, *tiltil* (*Boerhaavia repens L.*) another plant called *tiltil* (*Indigofera Sp.*); *Wangrial* (*Justicia malammensis* (*Schwenf*) *oliv.*), *när yiauwa* (*Emilia sagittata DC*), *mut ngai*, 'spear of the francolin' (*schleria foliosa A. Rich.*), *wöör* (*Portulaca Quadrifida L.*), *kutkakdeet* (*Glycine Borianii Bak*), *tac* (*Ipomoea reptans Poir*), *pac* (*Urochloa s:.*), *nyiök indil pin*, *tiecdong* (*cyperus rotundus L.*), *tiec*, *belagak gordet*, *kër jaakoak* ('crow's pumpkins'), *thil in cöt*, etc., etc.

XI.

Besides having to adapt themselves to conditions of water supply and vegetation Nuer have to adjust themselves to conditions of insect-life which is an ever-present obstacle to cattle husbandry in their country. The cattle get no rest from stinging flies and ticks from

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XIII.

Although there is more food in the rains the young men prefer the dry season for they can then spend all day in close association with their comrades and there is plenty of opportunity and leisure for dancing, flirting and displaying themselves before girls from other villages. In the dry season also people can sleep outdoors in the open air with their cattle, for there are few mosquitos. The dry season is also the time for fishing in pools, rivers, and lagoons, and this occupation gives amusement as well as providing tasty and nourishing food. Tiop told me "When the north wind blows at the end of the rains the young men rejoice because the windy season has come. Now they can sleep outside and there are no mosquitos. Now the whole land is burnt and a man can see over the countryside in every direction. Now a man can go out fishing by himself and may be he will not return to camp at night but will sleep on the river-bank. Now they drive the cattle to distant pastures. Only the old men prefer the rains because their bellies are then filled with millet and maize and beer: but the young men rejoice when the north wind blows."

A Western Nuer said "The dry season is good, for then you kill hippopotami and animals of the open plains, and there is the *dompiny* dance and flirting with the girls and jumping and singing behind your oxen. The wet season is good also for then there is plenty of millet, food and beer. Both seasons are good."

As camp life is not everywhere exactly the same it is easier for me to describe the life of members of a section of the Lou tribe who collected at Yakwac on the Sobat River in 1931, as they do every year, and to make comments which will denote certain differences between the mode of life I observed during a lengthy residence there and modes of life observed at dry season camps in other parts of Nuerland.

Camp life is monotonous and drives an anthropologist to despair as nothing unusual happens. Nuer are not eager to fight at this time of the year and marriage, mortuary, and initiation ceremonies are normally held during, or at the end of, the rains, when millet and beer are plentiful. I have spent weeks in camps watching the same daily round. A description of one day serves for any day.

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•221 Hunger is partly responsible for the low pulse of life at this season. As has been explained, Nuer cultivate little and in most districts, especially in Lou country, they have to husband their grain if it is not to be exhausted long before the new harvest has ripened. They leave most of the grain in their wet season villages for seed and to support themselves during the hungry weeks that last from sowing to harvest time. They do not carry much millet to the camps so that they have to use it sparingly, though, if the camps are only a day or two away from the villages, women will sometimes return to get further supplies from the village granaries. When the dry season is well advanced the cows often cannot obtain sufficient pasturage of a nourishing quality and give little milk. Those Nuer who camp at the edge of inland pools and lagoons can supplement their diet with fish, but on the Sobat we only had what few fish boys could spear in the shallows and the yield of harpooning from our single canoe. From time to time members of our camp managed to kill wild beasts: gazelle, cob, tiang and giraffe. Otherwise our meat supply was limited to an occasional ox or cow which died and to blood from the necks of cows.

805 233 Camp life is regulated by requirements of the cattle and Nuer speak of periods of the day by reference to pastoral tasks rather than to the course of the sun, *e.g.*, they say that they will do something at the time of milking, or after the cattle are driven to pasture, or when the calves return to camp. The camp time-table varies little from day to day. It is approximately as follows:—

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A.M.

6.00 Everybody rises.
6.45 The cows are milked.
8.00 The cattle are driven to pasture, the kraal is cleaned and the morning meal is served.
8.15 Goats and sheep are milked and taken to pasture.

P.M.

4.30 Calves, sheep and goats are brought back to camp.
5.00 Cows which have recently calved come running home.
5.30 The herd returns and the cows are milked.
7.30 The evening meal is served.

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In a big camp there is often dancing at night and youths and girls pay evening visits to neighbouring camps to take part in the dances. There is a special dry season dance quite different from the drum dances of the wet season. It is called *dompiny*. A small hole is dug in the dancing place and a piece of hide is stretched tightly across it. A length of cord is stretched over the hide and is pegged on either side of it. A small stick is placed on the hide over the centre of the hole and the cord is supported by the top of the stick and slopes on either side of it to the ground. The cord is thus kept taught. The hole acts as a sounding box. The performer obtains music by striking the cord with a thin stick held in his right hand as he sits cross-legged before it and by muting it with his left hand or with a stick held in his left hand. By this means he produces rhythm. Sometimes another man beats at the same time with his hand on the hide near the sounding hole. The people dance and sing, men dancing opposite women. A man holds his hands above his head like an ox's horns and as he sings he steps backwards and the girls opposite him move towards him. They thus circle round the musical instrument.

Girls sometimes have their own singing parties in these camps. They sit and sing to a rhythm made by slapping their outstretched thighs. This is called *patpat*. Youths who are courting the girls often join them and take part in the singing. It is customary for young men to visit girls and court them when the day's work is done.

If there is no dancing at night—and in the smaller camps where there are few girls, and these mostly kinswomen, the young men do not care to start a dance—the inmates of the camp chat in their windscreens and at the thresholds of their huts for an hour or two after the evening meal and then fall off to sleep. Sometimes they chat till close on midnight and occasionally a man who is happy walks amid the cattle, ringing an ox-bell and singing for an hour or more. Sometimes an animal has strayed from the herd. Then everyone is sad and its owners are out in the bush till late at night searching for it.

One day in a Nuer cattle camp is like another. Calves are born and we see time passing in the stages of their growth. Nor does life

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vary much from month to month for there are few seasonal changes at this time of the year. As the river falls it is possible to fish in lagoons and shallows and to bathe on its sandy bed. Then the lagoons dry up. When the river rises fish swim in the weeds and rushes and along some streams they are easily speared from the banks. The banks of the Sobat are too steep for this purpose. There are no longer shallows and bathing is a hasty dip for there is danger from crocodiles. The grazing grounds are changed from time to time as they become exhausted and as streams and lagoons dry up. At Yakwac there was succulent pasturage only where marsh plants still retained their moisture at the river end of lagoons. The people are still in camp when the first rains fall at the end of April or early in May and then there is everywhere an abundance of pasturage. The brown bush becomes green and the baked fissured earth a sodden mire. Dry lagoons become inland flowing streams. The scorching sun is clouded.

On the Sobat we guessed that the first rains had fallen inland by the migration of wild animals from its banks. Giraffe now left us for inland pastures where they would not have to face death every time they approached the river. Other animals likewise moved southwards, even the gazelle. On the northern bank, however, buffaloes still came to the river to drink and were attacked by hungry Nuer. Animals and men must obey the seasons and when there is no water except in inland lakes and lagoons, men, cattle, and wild beasts must drink at the same places. One can hear them at night cautiously coming to the pools to drink. When the rains come all leave for new pastures.

In May one knows that the move back to the wet season villages will shortly take place not only by cloudy skies and movements of game, but also by camp activities. The women are the first to leave camp and one meets them along paths, carrying their household goods in rectangular cane baskets. Youths leave camp early in the morning to cut stakes, generally of thornwood (*bwau*) and they spend a large part of the day shaping them into tethering pegs. They also twist new cord. The weather being cooler people do not feel so keenly the need to sleep towards noon. Everyone is becoming restless and

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anxious to start for the wet season villages. At the beginning of June the camps nearest to ours, those at Dengatwor and Wecgin, broke up and our companions at Yakwac began to move inland a few days later.

The dry season (*mai*) is over and the wet season (*tŏt*) has begun. The camp (*wec*) is broken up and the village (*cieng*) is occupied once more. The long idle days are ended and men and women turn to strenuous work in their gardens.

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to the site of their old homes but were then too exhausted to resume their feud with the Yol section.

Another recent feud in Lou country was, I believe, that between Falkir and Nyajekany tertiary sections of Rumjok primary section, and there have been others between various sections of the Mor moiety, particularly between two sections of the Jimac[1].

The commonest occasions of feuds are probably related to economic activities. One section pastures its cattle on grazing grounds over which another section has rights of ownership—rights, as we shall see later, which derive from clan heritage and are divided among the chief lineages of the clan; or men of one section attempt to water their cattle at the wells of their neighbours; or there is conflict over fishing rights. For a tribe is an economic group and so is each of its sections. This is shown in map No. V, for which, together with map No. IV, I am indebted to the industry of Mr. C. L. Armstrong. The curved lines show areas of permanent villages of the Gaagwang tribe and the main sections of the Gaajok and Gaajak tribes, while the straight lines show the area of their dry season encampments. Map No. III was drawn up by myself after questioning Lou tribesmen and is intended to give an idea of the areas of the dry and wet season occupation of the Lou, but I was unable to visit more than a fraction of the area in person. It is, therefore, not likely to be so accurate as Mr. C. L. Armstrong's map of distribution. Both maps show the annual movement of the sections from their permanent villages to their annual watering places and pastures in the dry season. The whole of Nuer life follows the rhythm of the seasons. I will describe this rhythmic movement as briefly as possible as I hope to write a separate paper on Nuer economic life. The major parts of Jekany and Lou countries are huge, flat, treeless plains of cotton soil. Where there is a slight rise in the plain the spot is selected as the site of a permanent village consisting of well-built huts and cattle byres. Where there is a dip in the plain we find rivers, pools and swamps. The Sobat river begins to fall about December when the rains decline and as it falls it drains the streams into which it has emptied its waters earlier

[1] I take this opportunity to add a footnote to explain that I have not been consistent in my use of Nuer spellings for tribal sections and clan lineages. Thus a clan lineage may be called after a man called Kwe, but his descendants will be *gaat* kwith and his village *ciang* kwith. A clan is called after a man yi and becomes *ciang* yie, or after yoal and becomes *ciang* yol. I fear that I have sometimes used the nominative and sometimes the genitive cases. Hence on Map No. V Yoal and Wangkeac may be read as Yol and Wangkac.

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133 in the year. At about this time the younger men of the tribe take the cattle out of the villages while the older men and the women reap the harvest. When the harvest is completed they burn the grass around the various pools which they intend to make their dry season quarters. As these rain-water pools dry up, the various household groups and groups of households which have been quartered near them begin to concentrate around larger pools in river beds or near a river bed in which it is known that wells can be dug or along the banks of the Sobat itself. Here they spend the remainder of the dry season. The Sobat begins to rise again about May and further drainage ceases. In June the rains commence and a double process of irrigation occurs. The Sobat runs out along what, on a map, appear to be its tributaries, but are more accurately its channels of overflow, while at the source end of these streams the rains begin to collect and run towards the Sobat, so that the two waters, the outgoing river water and the incoming rain water, meet. As soon as the rains commence, part of the occupants of the dry season camps return to their villages to sow the crops and as soon as it is seen that the rains have set in for good, they are followed by the young men who drive the cattle as quickly as possible to the villages where they will spend the height of the wet season.

Year by year this ebb and flow from village to dry season camps and back again goes on, but, though it is repeated each year, the time of movement, the density of concentration around water supplies, and even the place of concentration, vary according to the severity of the season. Thus, the Lou will remain as long as possible around their area of permanent villages and will concentrate around large pools like Tepjor, Nyerol, Muot Dit, Muot Tot, Fading, rather than migrate to the Sobat, Nyanding and Geni rivers, and the Dinka marshes, though I think that they generally find their way to these localities before the dry season is over.

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114 A permanent village may consist of a group of huts and byres on an isolated *dabba*, but those I have seen generally comprise a slightly raised area of ground of a few hundred square yards dotted with strings of homesteads. A village may cover an area of several square miles without intermission of dwellings. I regret that I am not able to give any clear idea of the social distribution of these villages since I have only lived with the Nuer in their dry season camps save for a short stay at

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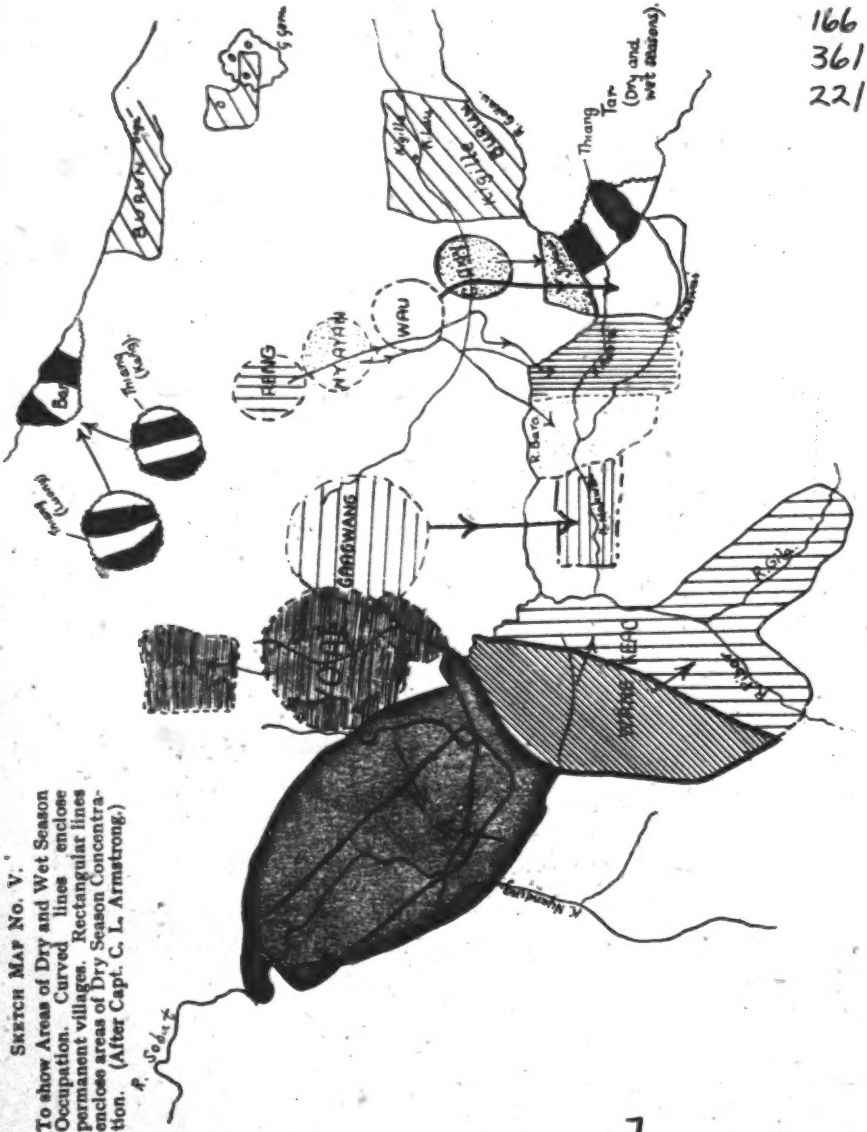

SKETCH MAP No. V.
To show Areas of Dry and Wet Season Occupation. Curved lines enclose permanent villages. Rectangular lines enclose areas of Dry Season Concentration. (After Capt. C. L. Armstrong.)

[facing p. 30]

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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231 [776] turn into a 'Lat' (a combination of ogre and cannibal which figures largely in folk-lore tales. Nuer firmly believe in these Lats and fear them).

Nuer, be they men, women, or children love their cattle; they are the pride of the tribe. The people delight in being among them. When a boy has his tribal marks [551] cut, he assumes an ox name in addition to his own.

[825] The cattle are always supposed to see the new moon one night before the people see it.

If a cow is sick, she is well cared for. Everything possible is done for her so far as the Nuer's knowledge goes. A wasps' nest is soaked in water and the mixture forcibly administered to the cow as a preventive against a certain fever.

A bunch of a certain kind of leaves tied about a cow's neck is supposed to help her if all is not right with her when she has just calved.

Muzzles made out of thorns are fastened on the mouth of a calf when they wish to prevent it from sucking.

The Nuer also have sheep, and numerous dogs may be seen.

[262] During the fishing season when many go to the fishing camps, the Nuer depends upon fish and milk for his food. The cattle are always taken to the fishing camp—for grazing is usually good—hence the milk supply.

THE FISHING SEASON

226 221 When the dry season is on, the river falls fast and the Nuer is eager to fish. The rivers are full of fish, great big ones, including the Nile perch and several other large white fish which are specially desired for food. In December and January Nuer with their cattle move from the villages to the fishing camps. They build (Fig. 6) [342] bee-hive-shaped houses—even the walls are of grass.

The women and children sleep in these; the men sleep in the barns, if there are any, or among the cattle. 226 221

People under one chief spend the fishing season at the same fishing camp. Old people sometimes remain in the villages, but the younger ones enjoy the companionship of others and the change from the routine village life. It serves the same purpose as our summer trip.

While at the camp, fish are caught by spearing them with a special spear or by a hook and line left out all night as a trout line is sometimes left, or by the use of a fishing net, if any one is fortunate enough to possess one. 226

Later on, when the river is lower, fish traps are made by placing sticks close together in the river. When fish get into this enclosure they are unable to find the exit and are speared and taken. Nuer sometimes imitate the sound of fish by making a splashing noise in the water with a stick. Other fish gather, as they think, to where their fellows are, and are speared.

If many fish are caught they are dried and taken back to the village for later use, or possibly they are sent back at once to those who have stayed behind. Sometimes fish are not plentiful and then return trips have to be made to the villages to get dura for food. [251]

When the river begins to rise, fishing in the swamps may be continued for a little while. But soon all return to their villages, for as soon as the rains start, hoeing must be done and dura planted. Also, should their permanent village be across the river from the fishing camp, they must take their cattle over the river before it rises so much that the cattle are unable to swim it in safety. 226 221

THE FOOD-SUPPLY

The Nuer food-supply is frequently limited in quantity; it is also limited in variety. The foods the Nuer will eat 262

features characteristic of the areas occupied by the majority of the Nilotes - flatness, heavy clay soil, thick, tall grasses, swamp in the wet season and parched, brown stubble in the dry season. It is an area of true savannah.

The influence of environment on Nuer economy is profound. Although cattle form the great interest of the Nuer people, and are important socially as well as economically, horticulture is a necessary part of their economy owing to the prevalence of cattle diseases and the difficulties of obtaining adequate pastures in the dry season. Horticulture and cattle herding are, therefore, the two main economic activities, and together they determine the ecological cycle, as well as the distribution of population, village sites, and also the relationships between the various segments into which the Nuer are divided.

Nuer villages are situated on elevated ground out of reach of the wet season floods. In the early rains the cattle feed on young shoots near the village but, as the vegetation becomes too rank and the waters rise, the herds have to graze off the short grasses of the village ridges. During the wet season millet and other grains, vegetables and tobacco are grown in the gardens situated behind the homesteads. At the end of the rains, in November, the floods begin to recede. When the tall, tough grasses, which are unsuitable for the cattle to eat, are sufficiently dry they are burned. Since some varieties send up shoots a few days later, the cattle have fresh pasture until the height of the dry season when the water supplies fail in many regions. The Nuer then seek the permanent water-courses and dry-season pastures. When the harvests are finished they move from the villages to the dry-season camps; a period of wandering divides the two periods of stable residence. The dry-season camps are situated on the banks of rivers which do not completely dry up or on the edge of permanent swamps.

When the rains begin again in April and May, water and pasture become plentiful and a move is made back to the villages above flood level, in order to prepare the ground for cultivation.

The annual cycle is approximately set out below. It has considerable repercussions on social life and, although local conditions may cause some variation, the principles underlying the annual cycle are the same everywhere in Nuerland.

November - December. Youths and girls take cattle to camps while the old people remain in the village to harvest the second millet crop. Fishing camps may be formed on the banks of rivers. When the second harvest is finished the cattle are brought back to eat the millet stalks but as the pasturage becomes exhausted all eventually go to occupy new cattle camps. A period of wandering precedes the final settlement in the camp.

January - February. The married people join the youths when they settle in the final camping grounds. Camps get larger and larger as pastures become scarcer and more people join existing camps. Different villages and tribal sections tend to move at about the same time and to visit the same pools so that the sites of the main dry-season camps do not change from year to year.

221 241 233 *March - April.* When the rains begin the old people return to the village for sowing.

June. The rest of the people follow with the cattle. The move from camp to village is direct, whereas in the move from village to camp there is an intervening period of wandering.

The Nuer year is therefore divided into two parts, consisting of a period in the villages and a period in the camp. This annual transhumance is necessary for the very existence of the Nuer. Rinderpest prevents complete dependence on cattle, so that they must have villages on highlands, with gardens, in order to grow the necessary supplies of grain. Climatic conditions prevent complete reliance on cultivation and the need of fresh pastures and water for the cattle forces them into dry-season camps near permanent supplies.

361 Homesteads may be strung out along sandy ridges with gardens at the back and grazing in front and the location and size of the villages depend on the distribution and extent of the higher ground suitable for cultivation. The direction of the dry-season movements are determined by ecological conditions. Transhumance enhances the importance of units larger than the villages which, for economic reasons, cannot easily maintain a self-sufficient isolation as do the Shilluk, Anuak, Acholi and Lango villages where the emphasis is on cultivation.

ECONOMY

The economic importance of cattle to the Nuer

231 262 Economically, cattle are chiefly important for milk and milk products, such as whey and liquid cheese. We are told that the Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give.

Nuer eat meat boiled and roasted but, although they are particularly fond of it, they do not raise cattle for slaughter. It is considered that people ought not to kill cattle solely for food and, except on sacrificial and special occasions with a ritual aspect, the Nuer refrain from doing so. It is even thought that animals killed specifically for food might curse their owners.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa, the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle and use it as a supplementary article of [252] diet in dry season camps. The blood is boiled and taken with porridge as flavouring or is allowed to coagulate into a block which is roasted and then cut in slices.

237 Milk, meat and blood are the food products derived from cattle but the herds also furnish the materials for implements and other necessary articles. Skins are used for sleeping on, for trays, for carrying fuel, making cord for tethering, leather collars for oxen and in making pipes, spears and shields. Tail hairs are used for ornamentation, bones and horns are used for instruments, scrapers and beaters. Cattle dung is used for plastering walls and floors of huts; dried dung is used for fuel and